

Cultures of the Mountains and the Sea

MAIN IDEA

CULTURAL INTERACTION The roots of Greek culture are based on interaction of the Mycenaean, Minoan, and Dorian cultures.

WHY IT MATTERS NOW

The seeds of much of Western cultural heritage were planted during this time period.

TERMS & NAMES

- Mycenaean
- Trojan War
- Dorian
- Homer
- epic
- myth

SETTING THE STAGE In ancient times, Greece was not a united country. It was a collection of separate lands where Greek-speaking people lived. By 3000 B.C., the Minoans lived on the large Greek island of Crete. The Minoans created an elegant civilization that had great power in the Mediterranean world. At the same time, people from the plains along the Black Sea and Anatolia migrated and settled in mainland Greece.

Geography Shapes Greek Life

Ancient Greece consisted mainly of a mountainous peninsula jutting out into the Mediterranean Sea. It also included about 2,000 islands in the Aegean (ih•JEE•uhn) and Ionian (eye•OH•nee•uhn) seas. Lands on the eastern edge of the Aegean were also part of ancient Greece. (See the map on page 121.) The region's physical geography directly shaped Greek traditions and customs.

The Sea The sea shaped Greek civilization just as rivers shaped the ancient civilizations of Egypt, the Fertile Crescent, India, and China. In one sense, the Greeks did not live *on* a land but *around* a sea. Greeks rarely had to travel more than 85 miles to reach the coastline. The Aegean Sea, the Ionian Sea, and the neighboring Black Sea were important transportation routes for the Greek people. These seaways linked most parts of Greece. As the Greeks became skilled sailors, sea travel connected Greece with other societies. Sea travel and trade were also important because Greece lacked natural resources, such as timber, precious metals, and usable farmland.

The Land Rugged mountains covered about three-fourths of ancient Greece. The mountain chains ran mainly from northwest to southeast along the Balkan Peninsula. Mountains divided the land into a number of different regions. This significantly influenced Greek political life. Instead of a single government, the Greeks developed small, independent communities within each little valley and its surrounding mountains. Most Greeks gave their loyalty to these local communities.

In ancient times, the uneven terrain also made land transportation difficult. Of the few roads that existed, most were little more than dirt paths. It often took travelers several days to complete a journey that might take a few hours today.

Much of the land itself was stony, and only a small part of it was arable, or suitable for farming. Tiny but fertile valleys covered about one-fourth of Greece.

TAKING NOTES

Categorizing Use a chart to organize information about the roots of Greek culture.

Culture	Contribution
Minoan	Writing System; pottery designs
Mycenaean	
Dorian	